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Foreign Correspondence, Items, etc.

We are favored with the following extract from a letter lately received from Düsseldorf:

I am at present in Düsseldorf, and have made more acquaintances among the artists these past few days than I could possibly make in as many weeks at New York under the most favorable circumstances. It needs not much introduction. They live so closely together, that being acquainted with one includes a dozen; and consequently one is immediately admitted to their studios and social gatherings. I knew the name of Leutze, and as Leutze is an American, he was the first person whom I inquired for. My host, of the Crout market, directed me to the "Mahlkasten" or Painting Box, as the Club-house near Pfannenshoppen street, is called. Here a number of artists are wont to meet every night for recreation after the day's hard working is over. "Is Mr. Leutze here?" said I, addressing myself to a person whom I met at the entrance of the Garden. He turned round with me, and entering a kind of saloon connected with a bowling alley, he called out, "Mr. Leutze, a gentleman wants to see you; Leutze, where are you?" "One moment," was the reply; "first I must fetch that last one there," and down rolled the ball and the last one fell, and Mr. Leutze, in shirt sleeves, made his appearance. Without being known to him personally he requested me to take a seat, ordered a glass of bier, as no other beverage could be had except "Croton," and was about opening a conversation when the cry of "Leutze! Leutze! your turn," was heard again. "Excuse me one moment, but these fellows play so badly, that I have to do the work," and certainly a shout of applause followed the first throw. "That is our recreation," said Mr. Leutze. "All day long you may find us in our studios, and in the evening we are here seeking new strength and vigor by gymnastic exercises and social talk." And when we sat down at the big round table more than an hour glided away with the gentlemen around, among whom there were five Americans, pupils of Leutze. A sprightly little fellow came in and called his papa home—"Mamma wanted him." "Call at my studio to-morrow—at ten you will find me at work." Accordingly, the next morning at the appointed time I wended my way through the Hof Garden, down an avenue, toward the inclosure, in which Leutze's studio stands, expressly built and arranged for its purposes by himself. A servant (gardener, errand-boy, factotum in and out the studio) closed the gate behind me and conducted me to the building, a door of which opened immediately into an ante-room filled with all kinds of costumes, busts, canvases, and easels. Here Mr. Leutze paints small pictures. The room near by is large enough for a New York military company, both rank and file. A few scholars were at work, and a female model, in a brilliantly-colored dress, like a statue, sat motionless on an elevated chair. Some portraits of a large cartoon caught the eye, and above all the picture of the "Last Soirée of Charles II.," painted with that brilliancy peculiar to Leutze's brush. Charles is sitting among his favorites, with whom he is conversing in a way which excites marks of disapprobation on the stern, earnest faces of several gentlemen who are standing near by next to a column, while the courtiers, his minions, in front and before him, appear to be engaged in imitating their ruler. The picture is considered in Düsseldorf one of great merit. It is an historical

work, and at the same time a fair representation of the present court life of many of the petty German princes. Leutze, when drawing a cartoon, uses a glued paper and charcoal, a pair of bellows for working out the tints, together with some soft material like punk. The drawing is fixed on the paper by hot steam, conducted to it by a kind of retort, under which a lamp burns. The steam dissolves the glue, and covers the lines as if it were with varnish.

THE *Examiner* of this city contains a notice of the late JOHN BRITTON, by the Rev. Dr. E. L. Magoon, from which we make the following extract. Mr. Britton died on the first day of the present year.

Mr. Britton was born July 7, 1771, in Wiltshire, where he received some slight elementary education, and was early apprenticed to a wine-merchant in London. Every fragment of time that could be abstracted from regular duty was zealously employed in reading, by candle-light in the cellar, such works as could be obtained cheaply from the old book stalls.

In 1799, young Britton undertook to obtain a subsistence in the humbler walks of literature, encountering the usual vicissitudes, hardships and privations incident to such a career. His first effort was an "Account of the Surprising Adventures of Pizarro," which was followed by a great variety of publications, extending through more than seventy-eight years of active authorship. His primary art-feeling was for painting, but this soon blended with a stronger passion for monumental art, in the illustration of which he probably did more than any other man. Masters now occupy the field, of keener insight and more comprehensive grasp, perhaps; but the first extended survey was made by the genial and laborious pioneer just removed.

Mr. Britton's publications arrange themselves, first, under the head of topography. In 1801, appeared "The Beauties of Wiltshire," and at intervals, during the sixteen following years, "The Beauties of England and Wales," in fourteen volumes. In the meantime, he prepared the "British Atlas," to accompany the "Beauties," and in the "Annual Review" wrote numerous *critiques* on various topographical works, besides contributing to "Rees' Cyclopædia" all the articles on English and Scotch topography. As editor of "Havell's Picturesque Views of Noblemen and Gentlemen's Seats," "Robson's Views of English Cities," and "Picturesque Antiquities of English Cities," he further elucidated English topography in general. The metropolis received particular attention. "Memoirs of the Tower of London," "Temple Church," "Illustrations of the Public Buildings of London," "History of Westminster Abbey," and a "History of the late Houses of Parliament and the Ancient Palace in Westminster," are among the productions which emanated chiefly from his pen. To them should be added the works on "Sloane's Museum," "Ossibury Park" and "Deeplene." The latter was a grateful service on the part of Mr. Britton in favor of Thomas Hope, Esq., his early patron and friend, whose admirable work on architecture the former arranged for the press.

But however much he did for topography, Mr. Britton achieved vastly more for architecture, in its relation to history and the picturesque. In 1814, was published the first of the series known as the "Cathedral Antiquities of England," which before 1835 extended to fourteen volumes. "Graphical and Literary Illustrations of Fonthill Abbey," and a work on the "Architectural Antiquities of Normandy," were also produced prior to 1828.

In Archaeology Mr. Britton labored with great industry, producing many subordinate essays on Monumental Antiquities, which, though not in the form of independent volumes, are yet of much worth. At the commencement of his literary and artistic life he prepared drawings of Stonehenge, showing its appearance both before and after the fall of the great trilithon, in 1797. The "British Magazine," "Society of Antiquarians of London," "Royal Institute of British Architects," "Sussex Archaeological Association," and "British Archaeological Association," received constant contributions from his living voice and sagacious pen.

Mr. Britton was intimately acquainted with nearly all the eminent literati of his day, many of whom, from Sir Joshua

Reynolds to Sir Walter Scott, contributed to the interest of his diversified publications. But his acquaintance with artists was yet more extended and influential for good. Benjamin West, Frederick Nash, J. Varley, J. Buckler, Thomas Girtin, and J. M. W. Turner, were early employed to supply him drawings; and these furnished occupation for all the best engravers of the time, several of whom first rose to eminence under his fostering care. Mr. Britton secured the most skillful draftsmen extant, and by the superiority of their graphic illustrations, his architectural works rapidly assumed the highest degree of success. He first introduced Samuel Prout to the public, and drew George Cattermole, when a very young man, from being an assistant in a rural school in Norfolk. William Alexander, Sir Jeffry Wyatville, John Sell Cotman, Joseph Gandy, Charles Wild, William Westall, Copley Fielding, J. A. Repton, Edward Blore, and Frederick Mackenzie, were all in his service, and many of them his pupils. The latter, perhaps the best architectural draftsman that ever lived, was first made known to popular esteem in connection with Britton's "Architectural Antiquities of Great Britain." Henry and John Le Keux, the most famous engravers in their line of any land, were also first brought into general notice by the same work, and in the "Beauties of England." John H. Le Keux, the great living artist, who every way honors the genius and name he inherits, has likewise worked for the venerable friend of his father, and was summoned to his death-bed that he might be requested to supervise the posthumous disposal of his effects. Fortunately a large variety of choice originals, engraved in various illustrated works, came directly from Mr. Britton to the hands of the writer, and are now in this city. It is to be hoped that others may be brought to enrich the art treasures of our country, before the opportunity is lost.

ITALIAN COMMERCE IN PAINTINGS.—The *Giornale di Roma* of the 8th ult., states that the value of the paintings executed and exported by living artists at Rome, during 1886, amounts to 110,918 scudi, and the works of statuary to 277,116 scudi (the scudi is about one dollar). During the same year there have been exported old paintings to the amount of 11,448 scudi and old sculpture for 164 scudi.—*Evening Post*.

In regard to "old paintings" a truer statement would be made by substituting the word *bboxes* for scudi. Although the Roman authorities pretend to keep an account of the export of old paintings, yet a dollar given to a custom-house official will secure the passage of any box containing such trash, with no more examination on his part than a mere glance at the backs of the canvases, to assure himself there is no government property being smuggled out of the country. The officer's return of value to his superior no doubt corresponds with the real value of the goods looked at, as represented in the fee received by him.

The progress of photography is well illustrated in the following extract from a private letter, dated in London:

"Since your last visit to London I have added a few sketches of old houses and churches to my portfolio, as I seldom go out of town without bringing home some remembrance of that kind of the places I visit. I am, however, getting rather ashamed of them. Photography is so much more accurate, and in many cases even more artistic than any hand operations, that it takes 'the shine' out of my best efforts in that line. Some of the French operators have succeeded lately in taking beautiful interior views of their cathedrals, which, in a photograph, have a very fine effect; I have seen only a very few of them. Have they yet been sent over to your side?"

First we hear of nature, and the imitation thereof; then we suppose a beautiful nature. We must choose—but still the best. But how to recognize it?—according to what standard shall we choose?—and where is the standard then?—is not it also in nature?—*Goethe*.

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J. DURAND,
Editor and Proprietor.

Wholesale Agents, for the lower part of the city, Messrs. DEXTER & BROTHER, No. 14 Ann Street, of whom the Numbers of THE CRAYON can at all times be procured.—See page three of the Cover.

Sketchings.

DOMESTIC ART GOSSIP.

FROM Boston we learn that William Page has recently sent home several new pictures, all, we believe, for citizens of Boston. The principal one, a "Venus," is spoken very highly of by those who have seen it in Italy; but it is not yet placed on exhibition. Some, who may be esteemed good judges, consider it the finest piece of flesh color of modern times. It will probably not be exhibited previous to the opening of the Athenæum exhibition in the coming spring. The other pictures are a "Ceres," a "Visitation," and a "Mother and Child."

MISS HOMER'S "Puck" still remains on exhibition at Cotton's, and is really an exquisite work, simple, and naïve, and natural. Mr. WYLD has also sent home some striking and charming pictures, mostly studies of Italian models, simply, but full of color and light, and thoughtfully studied throughout.

MR. HEINE has on exhibition in his studio two landscape views of scenes in Central America. One is a view in the neighborhood of Lake Nicaragua, and the other of a scene upon the Pacific ocean, near the point where the projected ship-canal across the isthmus will terminate—if it should ever be constructed. Besides these paintings, Mr. Heine's sketches of Japan life and scenery are of special interest. Our readers are aware that Mr. Heine was the artist of the Japan expedition, a fact which could not reach the mind through the miserable abominations of illustrations which the government have allowed to go forth in its publication of the narrative of that expedition. The drawings and engravings for this work were carefully made, but most horribly printed. We heartily wish that a competent person could be appointed to superintend the art-publications of the government, not only to secure justice to the artist, and prevent public disgrace abroad, but to guard against the enormous frauds that are perpetrated by its agents under the mask of printers' contracts. The wisest act of the government in its relations to the Art-world is to be seen in the appointment of Captain Meigs to superintend the erection of the Capitol-extension, a gentleman of good judgment, and evidently possessed with a desire to foster the interests of American Art. Capt. Meigs has saved more money, and given the country more art, since his labors began, than is to be found in the value or quantity of all the country's Art possessions put together, since the Declaration of Independence. How such a man gravitated to the duty which he has performed so ably is to us a marvel. We mention the instance to show that similar departments require similar officials, and none more